Chante Luna and the Commemoration of Actual Events

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On the first of January in 1891, a train departed Brownsville, Texas, on its way to Point Isabel on the Gulf Coast, with a large shipment of gold and silver. At a point known as Loma Trozada, where the narrow-gauge track passed through a small incline, this train was derailed by a gang of robbers who then locked the passengers in a boxcar and made off with the loot. It became clear that the leader of this gang of robbers was a Texas-Mexican named José Mosqueda, who was eventually brought to justice and sentenced to life in prison.

A half-century later, in the Mexican state of Guerrero, a *pistolero* named Celestino Luna was involved in a shootout with *federales*, soldiers in the Mexican army, and a variety of police units. On August 23, 1952, Luna, known by his nickname *El Chante*, met his death at the hands of these elements in the small town of Mazatlán, not far from the capital city of Chilpancingo.

These are the two sets of actual events that will inform our discussion of folklorization and commemoration as patterned responses to the flux of collective experience. It is likely that the names of these protagonists (or antagonists, in some people's view) would have been forgotten or consigned to the periphery of local history were it not for the fortuitous happenstance that each captured the popular imagination in their respective zones and became the object of a celebrated monument in song, a *corrido* or heroic ballad. In the ensuing discussion, I will draw upon these two exemplary cases to explore the play of memory upon history in traditional forms of vernacular expression.

IN HOMAGE TO DON AMÉRICO

For aficionados of the work of Américo Paredes, the title of my paper will resonate with a title he gave to one of his own, "José Mosqueda and the Folklorization of Actual Events," published in 1973 in *Aztlán: International Journal of Chicano Studies Research.* This masterful article

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is just one of several attempts by Paredes to plumb the history of the Mosqueda case and specify the ways Texas-Mexicans adapted this history in their ballads and legends. The *Aztlán* article seizes on new documentary and field evidence to explore two additional facets of the José Mosqueda story, what Paredes terms "the *corrido*-legend process" and a thesis he ascribes to Latin American folklorists, "the 'folklorization' of historical events" (Paredes 1993:178). Inspection of the Paredes opus indicates that José Mosqueda exercised a powerful attraction: it was a topic he returned to repeatedly during the quarter-century when he was most active as a scholar, from 1951 to 1976.

I take my inspiration from Paredes in this paper, as indeed I have done through my entire academic career, and it would be fair to say that I intend to revisit the main themes that he so skillfully adumbrated in his treatment of José Mosqueda as an iconic figure for Mexican-Americans on the Texas-Mexican border. Both projects are inspired by the immutable presence of a famous *corrido*, and both gather all available sources of information to shed as much light as possible on the actual events of historical record. More importantly, the present endeavor, like Paredes's work with José Mosqueda, addresses the process of remembering as it occurs in human communities and verbal resources such as song and story. I offer this paper as a further exploration of these themes, in the belief that the techniques and concepts employed by Paredes to assess the Mosqueda case are deserving of further elaboration, and that we may hope to obtain additional insights into the play of memory in conventional verbal forms. In the end, both lines of investigation acquire significance well beyond the realm of ballad studies or studies of Mexican or Mexican-American history, isolating as they do basic features of the human imagination, and the use of narrative discourse to capture viable renditions of the past.

Nonetheless, the present study is not simply a replication of a hallowed precedent transposed to a different clime. The two shifts in content from his title to mine indicate two important domains of difference. First, it is not José Mosqueda who will occupy our attention. Instead, we take up the case of Celestino Luna, known as El Chante, a tough character who roamed the Pacific Coast of Mexico into the early 1950s, a key figure in the mix of politics and violence afflicting Acapulco and more broadly the state of Guerrero at that time. Second, our inquiry is informed by the process of *commemoration* rather than *folklorization*, a shift in analytical focus that opens a somewhat different perspective on the reconstruction of history's actual events.

Absent from this project is the pattern of inter-ethnic strife so prominent in the folklore of the Border people, replaced by a heroic, anti-government stance that imposes its own reading of actual events, so far as they are knowable. But it is the embracing of commemoration, and casting ballad as commemorative discourse, that opens the widest gap between these parallel exercises. The process of commemorating can be thought of as a remembering together tending to honor and elevate its subject. The ballad as commemorative discourse is possessed of stylistic and rhetorical elements that essentially canonize its heroes, assimilating them to an idealized ethos defining the ballad community. The logic of commemoration requires a selection of narrative themes that evoke strongly positive sentiments in the community of listeners, and this process can achieve remarkable effects in settings where ballads are performed. In local performance venues, these songs produce a blending of identities as listeners picture themselves in the roles of ballad protagonists, or imagine the merging of two worlds, the mundane and the heroic, pushing historical reconstruction in the direction of historical reenactment.

THE LURE OF JOSÉ MOSQUEDA

What was the hold that José Mosqueda exercised on the mind of Américo Paredes? We might even call it an obsession in view of his repeated circling back to it over the years. The initial seeds were sewn in the youthful Américo. He begins the 1973 article in *Aztlán* with one of those poignant vignettes of old days on the Lower Rio Grande that occasionally grace his writings:

> Since my early childhood on the Texas-Mexican border, I have been familiar with legendary accounts about José Mosqueda, who held up the Point Isabel train, and about his deadly little partner, Simón García. Many times in my youth I sat around campfires or at *ranchero* gatherings in the cool of the night, and when the conversation turned to subjects such as trains, sharpshooting with a .30–30 carbine, godsons and godfathers, buried treasure, or even casual reference to the town of Point Isabel (now Port Isabel), someone would tell part of the story of José Mosqueda (Paredes 1993:177).

A strong lure, no doubt, these early encounters with a romantic sense of place and community, evoked through reminiscences about the 1891 train robbery and the legendary characters who carried out the heist.

Another lure is the link to an esteemed musical ancestor. The only extant performance of "El corrido de José Mosqueda," which apparently circulated on the Border when Paredes was a youngster (though he does

not mention hearing it then), is in the voice of José Suárez, whom he characterizes as "a blind *guitarrero* . . . perhaps the most celebrated *corrido* singer on the Lower Rio Grande Border during the first forty years of the present [20th] century . . . [who] may have been the creator of many of the *corridos* of border conflict current during the same period" (Paredes 1993:177). It must have been thrilling for Américo Paredes, the young scholar, to find footprints of this legendary musician whose name is so closely associated with *corridos* of border conflict.

Add to these elements the fact that it was the distinguished father and son team, John and Alan Lomax, who recorded "El corrido de José Mosqueda" from José Suárez, singer and composer of border ballads, during their visit to Brownsville in 1939. The Lomax's recording is found in the Library of Congress collection AAFS 2609A1, as Paredes discovered in person, where it was mistakenly catalogued, he tells us, as "La Batalla de Ojo de Agua," which he describes as "a *corrido* about a border raid by the *sedicioso* chief, Aniceto Pizaña in 1915" (Paredes 1958:154). This ballad of sedition, in turn, was filed in the Library of Congress under the title, "El corrido de José Mosquera." Paredes experienced not only the pleasure of finding these pieces of ethnic and regional lore in the official record of the nation's culture, but also that of correcting the filing errors of our country's two most assiduous collectors of traditional song.

Youthful encounters with the story, the involvement of blind guitarist-singer José Suárez, a place in the Library of Congress, the intervention of the Lomax's, all amounted to powerful lures no doubt. In addition, Paredes was involved in uncovering new documentary evidence relating to the case, through his own field research and that of his students and associates in the Brownsville-Matamoros area. While apparently the ballad was no longer sung in the 1950s, people did recall stanzas from it, and they still told stories about José Mosqueda and his band of train robbers. Archival materials in the form of letters, state documents, and memoirs, and field materials including new stanzas of the *corrido* and one "especially interesting version of the José Mosqueda story" (Paredes 1993:178), came into his hands during the 1950s and 1960s.

Paredes was dedicated to the José Mosqueda project, arguably beyond even his dedication to Gregorio Cortez, subject of his dissertation and first book, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* published by the University of Texas Press in 1958. Paredes (1993:177) tells us that "in 1951 and again in 1954 I made field-recording trips in the Brownsville-Matamoros area" and "collected what historical data were

available on José Mosqueda, as well as legendary accounts about him." In 1958 he published in *Western Folklore* an eight-page article making the case that "El corrido de José Mosqueda" exhibits the effects of "folklorization" which he pictures in this article as "pressure exerted by a well-known pattern" capable of "giving form to a comparatively formless original, or replacing (partially at least) one pattern with another, when the latter has a stronger hold on the group imagination" (1958:154).

Then, in 1967, Paredes traveled to UCLA to read in Spanish, at the Second Summer Institute of Latin American Folklore, a version of the paper he was to publish six years later in *Aztlán,* concerning "the folklorization of actual events." Even after the *Aztlán* article, he returned to José Mosqueda in 1975 to place the Spanish version in *Folklore Americano* (volume 20, pages 55–82), and in 1976, to include "José Mosqueda" in his *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border,* published in the Music in American Life Series by the University of Illinois Press. His statement there summarizes the argument that in this song, "Some minor historical data (a train robbery) are superseded by an overriding historical fact (the clash of cultures)" (Paredes 1976:30). A final phase in this literary trek is the republication of the 1973 *Aztlán* article in Richard Bauman's 1993 compilation of essays and articles by Paredes called *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border,* and I draw on that release of the article in the citations that follow.

THE FOLKLORIZATION OF ACTUAL FACTS

From the early 1950s to the middle 1970s Paredes continued to wrestle with challenges provided by the José Mosqueda case, and his notion of transformation through folklorization was without doubt a bold and insightful maneuver. The rubric of *folklorization* entails a reorientation of folklore study from the venerable artifacts of vernacular cultures to the choices and actions, the mental and social processes that establish and maintain those artifacts. It is a progressive stance confirming Richard Bauman's assessment of Paredes as a scholar who posed "bold challenges to traditionalist understandings" (Paredes 1993: xiv). By interpolating the concept of folklorization, Paredes places the process of traditionalizing above the items or objects that are revered as traditional. At the same time, this shift to thinking of vernacular expression as a process rather than a product was very much in keeping with the contextual approaches to folklore study that were gaining influence among folklore scholars in the United States, partly in response to the path-breaking ideas of Paredes (Bauman and Paredes 1971).

Curiously, Paredes does not offer much in the way of background on the pivotal concept of folklorization. He tells us that he takes his cue from his Latin American colleagues, and one of the valuable services he provided throughout his academic career was translating back and forth between the worlds of Anglo American and Latin American folklore scholarship. A principal contribution in this area is his 1969 article "Concepts about Folklore in Latin America and the United States" (published in the *Journal of Folklore Research*), written after attending the 1966 International Congress of Americanists in Mar del Plata, Argentina, and meeting subsequently with folklorist colleagues in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He usefully summarizes the major points of divergence separating folklore research in the two hemispheres, but relays nary a word on the folklorization of actual events.

The shift from the static noun, *folklore,* to the more active *folklorization* connects with a growing uneasiness among Latin American scholars at the time with the term *folklore* and the political connotations of its usage. During the heyday of folklore studies in the post-World War II years, in much of Latin America, the *folk* and *folklore* became associated with governmental projects to craft an image of the nation favorable to the interests of the elites. This period saw the permutation of folk dance, for instance, into the national folkloric ballets, emblems of the well-adjusted populations which had allegedly fused into *mestizo* social formations (Guss 2000). By the late-1960's, Latin American intellectuals were beginning to use the term *folklore* and its derivatives in mediated formulations such as *folklorización,* to indicate contrived artistic production, and *proyecciones artísticas de folclore* (artistic projections of folklore) to signal the exploitation of tradition in high-art venues. In this light, the Latin Americans were participating in trends of thought that have conspired to enrich and complicate folkloristic discourse worldwide.

Paredes makes excellent use of the concept of folklorization in application to both ballads and legends circulating about José Mosqueda and the pilfering of the Point Isabel train. Regarding the ballad, Paredes hypothesizes from fragmentary evidence that this robbery inspired at first an outlaw ballad, a form of balladry that was common enough in the Border zone during the early years of the 20th century. As time elapsed and this initial ballad began to age, says Paredes, the source events acquired new vitality in a second ballad that answered to a different mandate, the call to dramatize episodes of conflict between Anglo and Mexican Texans.

In discussing this transposition of ballad content, Paredes develops a trenchant analysis of song evolution, which he portrays as a process that transforms lengthy, local ballads, replete with place names and references to locally-known characters, into shorter, less detailed, and often more artistic regional ballads. Part of this process, he alleges, may be the imposition of a dominant pattern of thought. As Paredes (1993:192) notes, "by 1939 the pattern of the *corrido* of border conflict has asserted itself upon the original intent of the Mosqueda ballad . . . an outlaw ballad is made into a border-conflict ballad." He sees a larger scheme in this shift in emphasis, constructing it as "an example of the way that folklore adapts all kinds of materials into generic patterns dominant in a tradition" (1993:192). Paredes recognizes that this instance does not present a direct folklorization of actual fact, but rather a secondary process "from a pattern accepted in the tradition (an outlaw ballad) to a form that has achieved dominance in the minds of the group (the corrido of border conflict)" (1993:192–93).

Paredes goes on in the *Aztlán* article to introduce the *corrido* legend as a companion to the ballad, and ultimately, as the final manifestation of a once well-known story after the ballad has faded into obscurity. His angle of vision is still historical or more properly, evolutionary: he wants to trace the changes experienced by traditional forms of expression as they ripen, mature, decay, and are (perchance) revived through time. The initial phase in this process evinces a symbiosis between *corrido* and *corrido* legend, when they may occur together as components of a single performance event. But he notes that the means and ends of these two genres are quite distinct. The *corrido* is a heroic discourse, committed in principle to historical accuracy. The legend, on the other hand, is susceptible to the whim of fancy, admitting counter-historical and even counter-factual elements more easily. Paredes (1993:194) formulates this contrast in this way: "The *corrido* of border conflict is realistic in tone. It exaggerates what it takes for fact, but it always gives us scenes taken from real life. The corrido legend, on the other hand, is more romantic."

His observation of border traditions led him to believe that with the passage of time the ballad was likely to fade from memory, leaving the last traces of a story lodged in surviving remnants of *corrido* legends. On the Border in the 1950s, nobody could sing "El corrido de José Mosqueda," but many people still knew the legends about Mosqueda, and as late as 1962 an *impressive version* of this legend came into his hands. Close inspection of this evolutionary process caused Paredes to question Carl von Sydow's classic distinction between active and passive

bearers of folklore: "The distinction really may be one between the carriers of certain highly structured genres like the folktale and the ballad, requiring the performance of specialists, and less formal genres such as the legend, which depends on a relatively informal dialogue carried on by two or more participants as its natural context" (1993:196).

Paredes sketches for us an evolutionary process affecting both the character of the ballad and the interaction between ballads and ballad legends:

> The telling of a legend . . . often accompanies the singing of the corrido. As the legend grows, the ballad diminishes. The ballad is no longer intended as a narrative. Its function is to evoke the image of the hero in lyrical or dramatic form. Meanwhile, the legend takes on more and more embellishments from the stock of universal motifs. If the process is continued indefinitely, one would expect to reach a point where the corrido disappears or is sung in such a fragmentary fashion as to be unrecognizable (1993:193).

His immersion in the expressive culture of his beloved *frontera* allowed Paredes to delve deeply into these social aesthetics, disposing of confusions that arise in more speculative exercises and bringing into sharp focus the dynamics of artistic process in one very fertile setting. He pointed to these dominant patterns of thought, but also to the performer's habits of thought, noting that José Suárez, the blind performer of "El corrido de José Mosqueda," had a penchant for songs of border conflict, and may have had a hand in turning the outlaw ballad in this direction.

THE CASE OF CHANTE LUNA

The story of Celestino Luna, El Chante, may at first glance appear to be an odd repository for deep folkloristic introspection. A hard man accustomed to taking human life, he cut a harsh figure in Acapulco and on the adjacent coastal strips, the Costa Grande and Costa Chica, midway through the twentieth century. But Chante Luna and his associates, and the *actual events* that marked their careers, have become objects of intense scrutiny in the popular imagination through forms such as the traditional ballad and the kinds of stories that are swapped over beers, tequila and *mezcal.* It is instructive to juxtapose these contrasting narrative forms. Ballad, legend, and anecdote agree to some extent on the basic facts of the situation but present different interpretations of their meaning and significance. These contrasting interpretations have the

effect of throwing into stark relief what we might call the value-added tendencies of popular balladry and the jaundiced view of the common wisdom spoken on the street. We will add to our portfolio the peculiar angle of vision of the journalist, who seeks to cleanse, as far as possible, the sullied image of Guerrero by cheering on the forces of law and order, and minimizing the appearance of social chaos.

The case of Chante Luna offers prime material for sorting out what Américo Paredes calls "the folklorization of actual events" as well as the object of the present exercise, the commemoration of actual events. Both ballad and anecdote contrast sharply with the official story, and thereby highlight a process of folklorization, the imposition of a dominant pattern of thought. The ballad in particular moves towards an elevated portrayal of the hero, one that honors and even idealizes him, and thus takes us into the realm of commemoration. The case of Chante Luna offers valuable insight into how people process history, and how they make use of traditional expressive forms to cope with the often disconcerting swirl of actual events.

We have, then, three narrative media for perceiving Chante Luna and the actual events associated with him: the "official" story as presented in the press, an unofficial story circulating in anecdotes and informal folk histories, and an idealized story encoded in the melodious strains of *corrido* poetry and song. Let's inspect these with an eye towards identifying the assumptions and concerns shaping each version of the basic story. We begin with the ballad, "El corrido de Chante Luna:"

"EL CORRIDO DE CHANTE LUNA"

Possibly the most famous *corrido* from the Guerrero coast, after "El corrido de Simón Blanco," is "El corrido de Chante Luna." Unlike "Simón Blanco," this *corrido* has not gained currency in the national ballad corpus. As far as I know, its popularity is restricted largely to the state of Guerrero. But in Acapulco and up and down the coast, "Chante Luna" is one of the preferred songs of *corrido* performers and audiences. This *corrido* was widely sung when I first visited the Guerrero coast in 1972, and its popularity appears not to have faded since that time. The singers we encountered during the summer of 1996 were ready with it and often put it forward at the outset as the supreme example of a local *corrido.* As is true with "Simón Blanco," a rather streamlined standard version has emerged from a longer text with more local detail. Thus, both "Simón Blanco" and "Chante Luna" bear the impact of the evolutionary process described by Américo Paredes, transforming local ballads with their

rough edges and ample detail into sleeker regional and even national ballads. An important feature of this process, not present in the case of "José Mosqueda," is the intervention of commercial recordings, which tend to reify the emerging truncated forms of the ballads. "Chante Luna" has been picked up by popular musicians who play at fiestas and in *cantinas*, and it has been recorded many times by several different *conjuntos* and released on commercial records, tapes, and CDs.[1] This displacement from the ballad's point of origin has the effect of accelerating the stylistic and thematic drift that Paredes writes about.

The standard version of the ballad, preserved in many recordings and repeated in most live performances today, features a set of roughly eleven stanzas that convey the basic story shorn of local detail. I present below a text of one rendition of this standard ballad, taken from a performance that my wife and I recorded in Acapulco's *zocalo* or Main Square in 1989. It is worth telling how this performance materialized. By chance one afternoon we came across three young gentlemen, dressed in white cotton clothing, with harp, *jarana*, and guitar in hand. I recognized two of them as young relatives of an elderly harp player from Cruz Grande, a town along the Costa Chica where I had reaped a stunning harvest of traditional ballads. I approached them and asked for a tune. Immediately they brought forth a Veracruz-style rendition of La Bamba. I then inquired if they knew any local *corridos*. They did a double-take, as in, *This gringo's asking us about corridos?* and then launched into a standard version of "El corrido de Chante Luna," sonorous and affecting in spite of the intrusive sounds of downtown traffic. I transcribe below the text of this performance, by Trio Cruzero in Acapulco, in February of 1989, and offer a parallel translation into English:

(1) *Voy a cantar un corrido*	I will sing a *corrido*
pa' los que me están oyendo,	for those who are listening to me,
les diré de lo que pasó	I'll tell you about what happened
en el estado de Guerrero,	in the state of Guerrero,
mataron al Chante Luna	they killed Chante Luna
por órdenes del gobierno.	on orders from the government.
(2) *Por las calles de Acapulco*	On the streets of Acapulco
El Chante feliz paseaba,	Chante went about at ease,
le tocó la mala suerte	it was to his misfortune
que mataran a Baraja,	that they had killed Baraja,
la muerte se la cargaron	they charged him with that death
porque el gobierno lo odiaba.	as the government hated him.
(3) *Lo llamaron al palacio*	They called him to city hall

lo quisieron disarmar,
le pidieron la pistola
él no se las quiso dar,
le dice Mario Martínez:
"Nada te puede pasar."

they wanted to secure his weapons,
they asked him for his pistol
he would not hand them over,
Mario Martínez tells him,
"Nothing will happen to you."

(4) *Cuando estaban en el palacio*
el Chante a Félix le dijo:
"Me llama el gobernador
quiero que vayas conmigo."
Quién lo iba a imaginar
que lo llevaban cautivo.

When they were in city hall
Chante said to Félix:
"The governor has called for me
I want you to come along."
Who would have ever thought
they were taking him prisoner.

(5) *El Chante como cautivo*
rumbo pa' la capital,
su padre Don Marcos Luna
se los quiso ir a quitar,
en el pueblo de Las Cruces
no lo dejaron pasar.

Chante as a prisoner
on his way to the capital,
his father Don Marcos Luna
wanted to go set them free,
at the town of Las Cruces
they didn't let him pass by.

(6) *Su padre Marcos dudaba*
y el Chante iba caminando,
en el pueblo de Mazatlán
allí lo estaban esperando,
setenta-y-dos federales
allí lo estaban disputando.

His Father Marcos was doubtful
and Chante was on his way,
in the town of Mazatlán
there they were waiting for him
seventy-two federales
there they were taking him on.

(7) *Le dice Nico González*
"Aquí te voy a bajar,
las órdenes que yo traigo
que aquí te debo entregar,
aquí son los federales
los que te van a llevar."

Nico González tells him:
"Here I will drop you off,
the orders that I carry
that here I should turn you in,
here it is the federales
who are going to take you away."

(8) *El Chante se hizo pa' atrás*
y la pistola sacó,
del cuello agarró a Martínez
cinco balazos le dio,
también a Nico González
la cara le atravesó.

Chante moved to the back
and he took out his pistol,
he grabbed Martínez by the neck
he put five bullets in him,
he managed to graze the face
also of Nico González.

(9) *Sonó la metralladora*
y el Chante se le enfrentó,
peleándoles desde el coche
donde el Patotas cayó,
también mataron al Chante
porque el parque le faltó.

Machine-gun fire sounded
and Chante turned to face it,
fighting them from the car
where Patotas fell dead,
they also finished off Chante
because he ran out of bullets.

(10) *Maganda y Riva Palacio*
se encuentran muy aflijidos,

Maganda and Riva Palacio
find themselves very afflicted,

sienten la muerte de Chante
y Nico que quedó herido,
la culpa no fue del Chante
porque ellos la habían querido.

they regret the death of Chante
and Nico who was wounded,
it was not Chante's fault
since they had asked for it.

(11) *Ya me voy a despedir*
por las leyes que derogan,
mataron al Chante Luna
porque les hacía mal obra,
de esos hombres pocos nacen
y el que nace no se logra.

Now I will take my leave
by the laws that are in effect,
they killed Chante Luna
because he caused them trouble,
few men like these are born
and the one born doesn't prosper.

Segments of the earlier version of this ballad are still known among members of the older generations. Notable in this substrate, and missing almost entirely in the standard version, is a subplot featuring the entreaties of Marcos Luna, father of Chante Luna, who pleads in vain for permission to contact his son after they have taken him north on the road towards Chilpancingo. Marcos Luna was a man of some influence at the time in Guerrero, an entrepreneur connected to the business class that was developing the port city of Acapulco into an international tourist site. His efforts to break through the police roadblock add a plaintive element to the story. I reproduce below a text of "El corrido de Chante Luna" that includes the Don Marcos Luna segment, from a performance that I recorded in Acapulco, March 1989, in the singing of two knowledgeable elders in the *corrido* tradition of the coast, Juvencio Vargas and Enrique Mares:

(1) *Voy a cantar un corrido*
a los que me están oyendo,
diré de lo que pasó
en el estado de Guerrero,
mataron al Chante Luna
por órdenes del gobierno.

I will sing a *corrido*
for those who are listening to me
I'll tell about what happened
in the state of Guerrero,
they killed Chante Luna
on orders from the government.

(2) *Era Celestino Luna*
un hombre de resolución,
por las costas de Guerrero
rifaba su gran valor,
sus amigos le decían
el Chante de corazón.

He was, Celestino Luna,
a man of great resolve,
along the coasts of Guerrero
word flew of his great valor,
his friends referred to him
as Chante, their heartfelt friend.

(3) *Por las calles de Acapulco*
Celestino se paseaba,
le tocó la mala suerte
que mataron a Baraja,
la muerte se la cargaron
porque el gobierno lo odiaba.

On the streets of Acapulco
Celestino strolled about,
it was to his misfortune
that they had killed Baraja,
they charged him with that death
as the government hated him.

(4) *Estaban en el palacio*
y el Chante a Manuel le dijo:
"Me llama el gobernador
quiero que vayas conmigo."
Pero jamás comprendía
que lo llevaban cautivo.

They were in the city hall
when Chante said to Manuel:
"The governor has called for me
I want you to come along."
But he never realized
they were taking him prisoner.

(5) *Lo sacaron del palacio*
lo quisieron disarmar,
le pidieron la pistola
él no se las quiso dar,
le dice Mario Martínez:
"Nada te puede pasar."

They took him from city hall
they wanted to secure his weapons,
they asked him for his pistol
he would not hand them over,
Mario Martínez tells him:
"Nothing will happen to you."

(6) *Agarraron la calle real*
rumbo pa' la capital,
Marquito Luna su padre
ahí se los quiso quitar,
en el pueblo de Las Cruces
no lo dejaron pasar.

They took the main highway
on their way to the capital,
Marquito Luna his father
wanted to recover him there,
at the town of Las Cruces
they didn't let him pass by.

(7) *El comandante le dice*
con un profundo dolor:
"Marquito, yo soy tu amigo
lo digo de corazón,
las órdenes que traemos
las dictó el gobernador."

The commanding officer tells him
with a deep sense of pain:
"Marquito, I am your friend
I tell you straight from the heart,
but the orders that we carry
were given by the governor."

(8) *Marcos Luna le contesta:*
"Soy hombre particular,
has dicho que eres mi amigo
hombre, déjame pasar,
lleven a mi hijo cautivo
lo pueden asesinar."

Marcos Luna answers him:
"I am a private citizen,
you have said you are my friend
come on, man, let me pass by,
they have taken my son prisoner
they might even kill him."

(9) *Marcos no quiso seguir*
y de allí se regresó,
entonces le dice a Félix:
"Esto lo presiento yo,
el señor Mario Martínez
a mi hijo lo traicionó."

Marcos chose not to pursue it
from there he returned to town,
after that he says to Félix:
"This is what I fear,
Mr. Mario Martínez
has now betrayed my son."

(10) *Marquito Lunas dudaba*
y el Chante iba caminando,
en el pueblo de Mazatlán
ya lo estaban esperando,
setenta-y-dos federales
allí lo estaban disputando.

Marquito Lunas was doubtful
and Chante was on his way,
in the town of Mazatlán
they were already waiting for him,
seventy-two federales
there they were taking him on.

(11) *Le dice Mario Martínez:*

Mario Martínez tells him:

"Aquí los voy a dejar,	"Here I will drop you off,
las órdenes que yo traigo	the orders that I carry
que aquí se han de quedar,	are that here you should remain,
'ora son los federales	now it is the federales
los que los van a llevar."	who are going to take you away."
(12) *El Chante se hizo pa' atrás*	Chante moved to the back
y la pistola sacó,	and he took out his pistol,
del cuello agarró a Martínez	he grabbed Martínez by the neck
cinco balazos le dio,	he put five bullets in him,
también a Nico González	he managed to graze the face
la cara le atravesó.	also of Nico González.
(13) *Sonó la metralladora*	Machine-gun fire sounded
el Chante se le enfrentó,	Chante turned to face it,
peleándoles desde el coche	fighting them from the car
donde el Patotas cayó,	where Patotas fell dead,
también al Chante mataron	they also killed Chante
porque el parque le falló.	because he ran out of bullets.
(14) *Mataron al Chante Luna*	They killed Chante Luna
lo deben de recordar,	you all should recall,
pero les queda un amigo	but there he has a friend
que le dicen el Chacal,	the one they call the Jackal,
cuídate, Nico González	watch yourself, Nico González
no se te vaya a olvidar.	don't you ever forget about him.
(15) *Maganda y Riva Palacio*	Maganda and Riva Palacio
se encuentran muy aflijidos,	find themselves very afflicted,
por la muerte de Martínez	for the death of Martínez
y Nico que estaba herido,	and Nico who was wounded,
la culpa no fue del Chante	it was not Chante's fault
porque ellos la habían querido.	since they had asked for it.
(16) *Ya me voy a despedir*	Now I will take my leave
por las leyes que derogan,	by the laws that are in effect,
mataron al Chante Luna	they killed Chante Luna
porque les hacía malogra,	because he caused them trouble,
de esos hombres pocos nacen	few men like these are born
y el que nace no se logra.	and the one born doesn't prosper.

Setting these two versions side-by-side reveals that the basic story remains constant for the most part: Chante Luna is captured through deceit on the part of associates Mario Martínez and Nico González, and is conducted by these persons in an automobile towards the capital of Guerrero, Chilpancingo; his father, Don Marcos Luna, attempts to break through the police barricade but is turned away; at the town of Mazatlán (not the one on the Pacific Coast) Chante is informed that he

will be delivered to the federales awaiting him there; Chante kills one of his associates and wounds the other, and then fights the superior force of federales alongside his companion, El Patotas, until they run out of bullets and are killed. In the aftermath of these events, the leaders are said to be remorseful for all the killing that took place. This aftermath is treated in another stanza that is sometimes added, whose text I reproduce below from the singing of Francisco Arroyo in Chilpancingo, in June of 1972:[2]

El Chante ya está en el cielo	Chante is already in heaven
dándole cuenta al creador,	giving account to the Creator,
y Nico está en la cárcel	and Nico is in the prison
consignado por traidor,	consigned for being a traitor,
también quedó desterrado	also sent into exile
Maganda el gobernador.	was Maganda the governor.

Even this small sampling of different versions shows that within a basic loyalty to the plot, "El corrido de Chante Luna" allows for considerable flexibility in terms of the inclusion of detail, the ordering of stanzas, the articulation of phrases, and the choice of specific words. If we are moving towards a reified standard version, we still have some distance to go. "El corrido de Chante Luna" is a ballad that possesses a vitality within the region, and singers shape its recurring elements to suit their own personal aesthetics.

In my recent study of Costa Chica *corridos, Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica*, I characterize "El corrido de Chante Luna" as the archetype of the *corrido* celebrating the deeds of violent men on the coast (McDowell 2000:139). The *corrido* poet makes use of several devices to draw a sympathetic portrait of Chante. First, it is made clear that Chante is the victim of the government, which orders his death because it hates him. He is painted as a man of firm resolve, famous along the coast, and a good companion whose friends gave him the nickname "Chante, their heartfelt friend." In this vein, he was accustomed to enjoy the streets of Acapulco, happy in the company of his many friends.

The *corrido* narrative makes it clear that this good man was framed by the government, accused of a murder that he did not commit. He is captured through a ruse: his associates tell him the governor wants to see him in Chilpancingo. They ask him for his weapons, but being a bold man, he refuses to turn them over. The Don Marcos redaction adds an important note of sympathy: Chante is not only a good friend to his

companions, but he is a son whose father cares deeply about him. But the father's pleas are futile against the hardened facade of the government; the case is so serious that even Don Marcos's friend cannot let him pass through the police blockade.

At the moment of truth, Chante is shown to be decisive and deadly, taking swift revenge against his false friends. Against superior odds he stands his ground, and with his last true companion he fights the federales, with their machine guns, to a bitter death. And even this death comes only after he has run out of ammunition. Chante is portrayed as valiant in responding to this impossible situation, which after all was not of his making. The *corrido* poet places blame unequivocally on the agents of the government, who brought persecution to this man and suffered, as a consequence, the effects of his just wrath. The truth of the matter is manifest in the fates of the principal actors in the event: Mario Martínez is dead, Nico González in jail, and Maganda in exile. And finally, Chante is given the *corrido* poet's highest accolade, drawing him in the closing formula into the company of men almost too good for this world:

De esos hombres pocos nacen	Few men like these are born
y el que nace no se logra.	and the one born doesn't prosper.

We have here a flattering portrait of a bold man of action. The *corrido* poet assimilates Chante Luna to the canon of local, regional and national heroes. Standing in opposition to the agents of the government, Chante Luna seems to merge with the great heroes of the nation, each in his or her time destined to fight, usually to the death, against the abuses of the *mal gobierno.* This rhetoric of defiance elevates the heroes of the *insurgencia* who cast off the Spanish colonizers in the early decades of the 19th century, as it does the leaders of the Mexican Revolution who fought to abolish the *porfiriato* and replace it with a representative system of government. It surfaces as well in *corridos* about more recent rebels and *guerrilleros* such as Juan Escudero, Genaro Vásquez, and Lucio Cabañas, each a native son of Guerrero who rose up against the government during the 20th century.[3]

But is this the final word on Chante Luna? Are we obliged to accept him as a hero of the nation, or at least, of the state of Guerrero? What other perspectives might help us reach a balanced perception? As it happens, the perspective of journalists writing in the newspapers, and of ballad singers discussing the adventures of Chante Luna, are available to temper the commemorative force of "El corrido de Chante Luna" while

at the same time underscoring its commemorative tactics. For a radically different view of the matter, let's inspect briefly what the newspapers have to say about Chante Luna.

CHANTE, A SOULLESS VILLAIN

During my stays in Guerrero I was often told to ignore what is reported in the newspapers, and attend instead to the words of the ballads. "La pura verdad," "son verídicos," ("the pure truth," "they are truthful"), were phrases I heard repeatedly in reference to the *corridos.* I decided that the suspicious versions of events placed in the newspapers would be well worth my attention, but I found that ballad makers and journalists did not often cover the same story. When they did, I noticed a coincidence in the story told in terms of basic factual details, but a sharp divergence in terms of describing action sequences and assessing motive and character. For the most part, journalistic accounts tended to editorialize, directly or indirectly, by assigning the protagonists of these violent episodes to the class of unworthy and even degenerate and antisocial persons. In stark contrast, the *corrido* poet was prone to hail them as exemplary for their firm character. In no case is this contrast drawn more clearly than in the case of Celestino (Chante) Luna.

Chante Luna was much of a presence in Acapulco and on the coast during Alejandro Gómez Maganda's term as governor of Guerrero in the early 1950s. A glance at the newspapers of the period reveals concern with *pistolerismo,* hired guns mixed up in politics, and Chante was among the more visible and ruthless of these tough characters. One gets the sense that the political and financial establishment, speaking through the voices of reporters and editors, was running a campaign to rid the state of what it perceived as a pestilence. Conversations I have had with several local historians indicate that Gómez Maganda, a writer and by all accounts a decent man, tried to placate this unruly social element—the *pistoleros* and their associates—by socializing with them and bringing them into his government, and that this strategy backfired when he was no longer able to control them.

In assessing the newspaper commentaries on the demise of Chante Luna, it is remarkable, first, to note the circumspection exercised by newspaper editors in addressing this evidently controversial topic. I searched in vain in the archives of several local and regional newspapers for any mention of Chante Luna in the days following his last encounter with the federales. It became instantly clear that his name was not plastered all over the headlines, as one might have expected. My first

strike came from an article in *Acapulco Gráfico,* dated August 31, 1952, with the headline:

Desmanes de Policia Federal (Abuses of the Federal Police)

The article cites "El crímen cometido en la persona del doctor Barajas Lozano . . . ," "the crime committed against doctor Barajas Lozano," thus linking the demise of Chante Luna to the Barajas case. But no names are given and the references to the events are quite oblique: "En el violento transcurso de ese drama, también murieron dos individuos que se supone incoados en el atentado al doctor" ("In the violent course of this drama, two individuals thought to be involved in the death of the doctor also died"). The *Acapulco Gráfico* article also states that two police officers were injured in the event. There was no further mention of the case in subsequent editions.

This coverage was so skimpy I wasn't certain that I had the right case. But I now had a time-frame, roughly the end of August, 1952, so I decided to check through back issues of the major Mexico City daily, *El Excelsior,* for this same period. At the Hemeroteca, the newspaper archive in the Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico City, I came across a long article on the death of Chante Luna, dated August 25, 1952, and written by José Manuel Jurado, reporter for *El Excelsior.* This article is replete with details and more overt in its editorial positioning than the *Acapulco Gráfico* piece. Taken together, these two journalistic accounts of the death of Chante Luna provide excellent material to assess differences in the handling of the story by *corrido* poet and newspaper reporter.

The *El Excelsior* reporter fills in missing detail on the identities of the government agents involved in the Chante Luna case. Ignacio Barajas Lozano is identified as the director of public health services in Acapulco; Mario Martínez is an agent for the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, the Federal Security Force, and Nicolás González is the chief of Guerrero's secret police, active in anti-narcotics work. These figures become prominent in this account while Chante and El Patotas recede into a penumbra of wicked intent. If there are heroes in the Mexico City version, they are these dedicated agents of the law.

The most striking feature of the newspaper accounts is the suppression of the names of the men taken as heroes in the ballad. As noted, the small article in *Acapulco Gráfico* omits mention of the name Chante Luna altogether. The longer piece in *El Excelsior* does mention names, but only deep into the article, on an interior page of the second section. In those paragraphs hidden well within this section, the names Celestino Luna

and Manuel García, his associate, are mentioned three times, and the writer even takes pains to convey their nicknames, Chante and El Patón (Big Foot), not El Patotas as in the *corrido.* The article's main headline, on the front page of the second section, refers to the main protagonists as "Doctor Barajas's murderers," and alleges that they were planning a massacre of police agents:

Los Asesinos de Dr. Barajas Preparaban una Matanza de Policías
(The Murderers of Dr. Barajas Were Planning a Massacre of the Police)

This omission of the name stands in contrast to the trumpeting of names in the *corrido.* The name Chante or Celestino Luna occurs twelve times in the Vargas and Mares version, repeating in several stanzas and absent only from those stanzas dealing with his father's efforts to breach the police blockade. The ballad is erecting an aural monument to its hero, constructed in part from a constant and affectionate mentioning of his name. The newspaper articles, in contrast, seek to efface the name as part of a program seeking to remove the man and erase memory of him altogether.

The diverging missions of these two narrative forms are made clear in the handling of story details as well. Where the ballad poet alleges a scam by the government to destroy a good man, the newspaper writer takes Luna's involvement in the killing of Doctor Barajas as a given and alleges a plot by Luna and his associates to exterminate police agents so that they might avoid *la acción de la justicia,* the exercise of justice. The journalist characterizes Chante Luna and Manuel García as leaders of a gang of cold-blooded killers who kill for money; they are *asesinos profesionnales,* professional killers. Twice the writer describes these men as *desalmados,* a strong attribution that can be translated as *soulless, cruel, inhuman,* and comes close to denying them status as human beings.

Equally striking is the disparity in the presentation of the action sequences. The newspaper article reverses all the heroic elements attributed to Chante Luna in the ballad. The newspaper account has Manuel García, not Chante Luna, wrestling with Nicolás González as they travel on the road between Acapulco and Chilpancingo and depriving him of his weapon; it is then Manuel who fires upon Martínez and González, killing the former and seriously wounding the latter. When the car comes lurching to a halt, Chante Luna, according to the newspaper account, jumps out and tries to flee, but a second car containing additional police agents comes up beside him and they shoot him as he runs.

The newspaper account deprives Chante Luna of the hero's attributes. Whatever admiration might be gleaned from this article is directed towards Manuel and not Chante, who in fact is presented as the epitome of the coward. These conflicting perspectives lay bare the strategy of the *corrido* poet, who draws on a code of heroic action to assimilate his subject to the archetype of *el valiente*, the bold man. Such a man must never surrender his weapons; to do so immediately deprives him of the hero's status. The hero must linger to face the music: however desperate the situation, he cannot flee. In the ballad, Chante refuses to give up his pistol and then goes down fighting against a vastly superior force of federales. Indeed, it is stated that he only succumbs when he runs out of ammunition.

Each of these discourses presents a flat stereotype, of the bold man of action in the *corrido*, of the craven coward in the newspaper account. In the midst of substantial agreement on basic details—the names of the protagonists on both sides, the final outcome of the encounter—these two accounts sketch a very different story, answering to goals that appear to be largely opposite to one another. The *corrido* poet, composing within the worldview of the ballad community, seeks to raise a monument to the hero. The journalist, composing within an ethos of social progress, seeks to banish a plague. Let's turn now to one additional avenue of insight, the common wisdom conveyed in the claims and speculations of those who lived through the Gómez Maganda days and witnessed, at one remove or another, the events covered in ballad and newspaper stories.

THE FUND OF COMMON WISDOM

There is in Guerrero a stream of common wisdom that flows uninterrupted and reaches into every significant corner of public life, providing an alternative understanding of events as displayed in the news media.[4] There is a sarcastic and sometimes cynical tone to this discourse of common wisdom, a response perhaps to what is perceived to be the blatant manipulation of public opinion by the authorities. It is, if you wish, a deflating discourse, with the underlying idea of a corrupt government that abuses the people, stealing from them to enrich those who pretend to be public servants. The concept of *mal gobierno*, mismanagement of the public trust, percolates throughout this fund of common wisdom. This same element surfaces in "El corrido de Chante Luna," but as we shall see, the voice of common wisdom does not coincide, in most respects, with the voice of the *corrido* poet. Their purposes are fundamentally distinct.

Since Chante Luna and his associates were so much in evidence during the early 1950s, they tend to appear in a good many conversational anecdotes. I restrict my attention here to just one such episode, a conversation between Enrique Mares and Juvencio Vargas that took place shortly after they performed their version of "El corrido de Chante Luna." It is customary in recording sessions to hear talk about the people and events featured in the ballads; Américo Paredes had noted the same interplay of story and song on the Border. A ballad chaser myself, I have benefited immensely from this natural channel of communication as these interludes of native exegesis have provided insights into *corrido* subjects and attitudes towards them. Indeed, it was the stark contrast between talk about ballads and the singing of ballads that first alerted me to the broad features of commemorative discourse (McDowell 1992).

Thus it was no surprise when Juvencio and Enrique began to reminisce about Chante Luna and Manuel García in the aftermath of their *corrido* performance. They could call to mind personal connections to the principals in this story. Juvencio, for example, had known Doctor Ignacio Barajas Lozano and thought of him as a good man, who would go out of his way to help people. Juvencio had worked as an apprentice with Manuel García, El Patotas, who was a well-known butcher of meats in Acapulco. Both Juvencio and Enrique remember Chante Luna as a bold and dangerous man. Enrique tells of a friend who was shot and severely wounded by Chante over a capricious exchange of looks. Their take on his character is free of any sentimentality; they recognize Chante as a violent, dangerous man. In this their wisdom departs in some measure from the more laudatory position of the *corrido* poet.

Still, Juvencio and Enrique remain essentially friendly to Chante's cause and construe him, in line with the take of the *corrido* poet, as a victim of government intrigue. Their rationale presents the government as running illegal drugs, and Chante as an accomplice who became too knowledgeable about the operation. Let's inspect a key moment in this exchange of words:

Juvencio: *A Barajas yo lo conocí pues, era buen doctor, chaparito, y buen amigo.*
(I knew Barajas, he was a good doctor, a little guy, and a good friend.)
Enrique: *Pero estaba metido en eso, en el mafia . . .*
(But he was mixed up in that, in the mafia . . .)
J: *A Barajas lo mataron pues . . .*
(So they killed Barajas . . .)

E: *La mafia pues del narcotraficante.*
(The mafia of drug dealers.)
J: *Traficaban en marijuana y cocaína.*
(They were dealing marijuana and cocaine.)
E: *Entonces le echaron la culpa de esa muerte de ese muchacho, pero él no era.*
(So they put the blame for that death on that boy, but it wasn't him.)
E: *El les sabía su movida, todo lo del gobernador. No le convenía al gobierno.*
(He knew what they were up to, everything about the governor. The government didn't like that.)
J: *El gobernador dice: "Mejor debemos matarlo, porque él se sabe todo." El sabía toda la política de ellos.*
(The governor says: "It's better if we kill him, because he knows too much." He knew all the political dealings of those guys.)

This rendering of the common wisdom preserves the larger construction of *mal gobierno.*

The governor of the state is depicted as actively engaged in the marijuana and cocaine trade. Instead of pursuing and prosecuting drug dealers, as he ought to, he and his cronies are aiding and abetting and in fact profiting from this illicit trade. Chante and his associates enter the picture as accomplices to this business, but accomplices who became too familiar with the game. The obvious solution is to destroy them, and this is done through a ploy involving the prior killing of Doctor Barajas. Blaming this unrelated death on Chante gives the government the pretext it needs to go after Chante.

This dose of common wisdom, then, agrees with the *corrido* poet and contradicts the newspaper reporter with regard to Chante's involvement in the murder of Doctor Barajas. But it adds a whole new level of interpretation, something missing entirely from both ballad and news article, namely the narcotics business as a context for all of these maneuvers. It is telling that neither the *corrido* poet, who seeks to elevate Chante, nor the journalist, who seeks to elevate the state, has any good reason to bring in the narcotics issue. It is left to the bearers of common wisdom, the story as told on the street, to alert us to this dimension of the tale.

CONCLUSION

The demise of Chante Luna is treated, we have seen, in these three narrative channels. In the midst of much agreement as to people and places, there are deep disagreements from one discourse to another regarding the sequence of actual events as well as the motives and character of the actors. There is much to be learned from this clash of

narratives about the process of memory and the uses people make of the past. What surfaces immediately is that there is no one true story, but rather a palate of alternative stories, each answering to a particular set of concerns and goals. The ballad maker approaches the topic with a wish to commemorate the life of a man taken as hero within the ballad community. The journalist finds in Chante Luna the epitome of a social pathology afflicting the state of Guerrero and obstructing political and economic progress. The man or woman on the street sees in these happenings the hand of a corrupt and abusive government.

Every teller has a stake in the tale, and this stake influences their take on the story. Who is the real Chante Luna? Most likely in some way a combination of all three portraits. But our purpose here is not to determine the truth about Chante Luna and his pal El Patotas, but rather to assess the handling of actual events in the poetic discourse of the ballad. By setting the *corrido* alongside the newspaper account and the casual narrative drawing on the fund of common wisdom, we can hope to isolate all the more clearly those elements of stance and technique that distinguish the *corrido.*

With regard to technique of discourse production, we must note the special circumstances and status of the ballad as an expressive form. The making and performing of *corridos* entails a level of musical and poetic expertise that is not available to the average citizen. In Guerrero, it is thought that the ability to perform music is a special talent, but the ability to compose song is a gift from God. Poets and composers of *corridos* and other song forms are held in great reverence. The *corrido,* after all, is a demanding and somewhat intricate verbal and musical genre, placing significant restrictions on both verbal form and thematic content. Speech must be packaged into repeating units of eight-syllable lines (with some twelve-syllable lines in the variant known as the *bola suriana*), and a recurring sound must link the final syllables of even-numbered lines within the stanza. Moreover, this verbal construction must be set to music, melding poetic line and stanza to musical phrase, melody, and chord progression.

But these formal arrangements don't really get at the heart of *corrido* discourse, which lies instead in the character of its thematic elements. The patterning of prosody into song occurs in any song form, but the special mission of the *corrido* is to tell a particular kind of story in a particular way. Thinking for the moment of the heroic *corrido,* what Guillermo Hernández (1992) and James Nicolopolous (1997), both drawing on the seminal ideas of Vicente Mendoza (1954), call the

epical corrido, the actual events contained in a *corrido* gravitate towards human encounters with mortality, and these stories are told in such a way that they assimilate their protagonists to a pre-existing pantheon of regional and national heroes. It is this assimilation of experience to a cherished canon or archetype most clearly foregrounds the process of commemoration.

Chante Luna of the *corrido* is a person worthy of a public monument as the embodiment of what is valued by members of the ballad community (Aguirre Beltrán 1958). In fact, "El corrido de Chante Luna" is nothing less than a verbal statue of the man, the multiple repetitions of his name serving to engrave it indelibly in our memories. His story as told in the *corrido* articulates well with basic tenets of heroic conduct: he is falsely accused, then imprisoned through deceit; he refuses to surrender his pistol, the mark of a valiant man; he wreaks vengeance on his betrayers; at last, against overwhelming odds, he fights boldly to the death, succumbing only when his stash of bullets runs out. This portrait of a man of courage is rounded out by mention of additional positive side-lights, his good companionship to his friends, and his strong relationship to his father. The Chante Luna of the *corrido* is an exemplar of the community.

The commemoration of Chante Luna in "El corrido de Chante Luna" activates a process much like what Paredes referred to as the folklorization of actual events. It is not difficult to identify *a dominant pattern of thought* that has lifted the actual events of the case from their original setting and recast them as a tale of the hero's demise. But I wish to emphasize in closing the imprint of commemorative thinking in the ballad. On this count, there is no confusing the ballad's perspective with the perspective of either the newspaper reporter or the common wisdom as spoken on the street, neither of which shows much in the way of commemorative intent. Indeed, the reporter seems to have an anti-commemorative stance, denying Chante any of the trappings of the hero, while the common wisdom seems largely indifferent to issues of commemoration.

In shifting from folklorization to commemoration to cover the work of memory in the ballad, I would place emphasis on the intimate correlation between means and ends in the production and performance of traditional verbal art. I submit that it is this simultaneous movement on two planes, towards a highly patterned vessel of expression and towards a highly resonant narrative plot, that results in what I am calling commemorative discourse. "El corrido de Chante Luna" exhibits both an intricate verbal structure and an archetypical thematic pattern, and

these two attributes combine to create a special and very powerful discourse form.

The remarkable efficacy of the resulting instrument lies in its ability to affirm and refine the sense of community, and its capacity to engender strong emotional identification with this collective ethos. "El corrido de Chante Luna," much like "El corrido de José Mosqueda," transports us from the realm of the informative into the realm of the commemorative. In the heightened state of consciousness produced by this encounter with poetry set to music, members of the ballad community experience a remaking of the social contract with themselves at the very core of significance. Under the power of this moving experience, they formulate a newly energized sense of self in *gritos*[5] such as *así es la costa, puro gallo* (that's the coast, nothing but fighting cocks), linking pride of place to a feisty animal that is elevated in local thinking as a token of unbridled defiance.

Commemorative discourse, by evoking local icons, inspires and rallies the loyalties of those who hold them in high regard. It has the potential, under the right conditions, to create an illusionary convergence in which the parameters of the narrative plot are transposed onto the frame of the performance event, causing those who perform it and attend to its performance to experience an ecstatic release from the normal burdens of life, an effervescent sense of belonging, a sudden illumination of underlying reality. In this light, "El corrido de Chante Luna" is not merely, or even primarily, a telling of a story, for all its dedication to historical detail. When performed in the appropriate settings, it is a celebration of community that conjures the archetypical hero in the alluring medium of song.

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NOTES

1. On different commercial recordings of this *corrido* the composer is listed as Simón Valdeolivar and Simón Tuba Valdeolivio, conceivably referring to the same person.
2. Paredes was much taken with the two-line formula about giving account to the Creator in heaven; he saw it, I think, as one of the more charming formulae in the tradition.
3. In spite of these similarities, people tend to distinguish between the outlaw and the rebel, often on the basis of altruism; it is said that the rebel fights for "un ideal," an ideal, while the outlaw is in it for the money.

4. I write in particular of Mexico and Guerrero during the period 1972 to 1996. During the early phases of this period, the news media were strictly controlled, mostly through government coercion, and their stories respected the wishes of the authorities. In recent years the Mexican press has become far more ambitious and news accounts are less confined than they used to be.
5. The grito, or shout, is a voluntary contribution on the part of performer or audience member, that is contoured and timed to complement the musical sound and may or may not contain a verbal element.

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